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Letter dated 27 March 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit a letter dated 20 March 2013 from the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Ramtane Lamamra, regarding a Ministerial meeting on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region, which took place on 17 March 2013 in Nouakchott (see annex). The conclusions of the meeting are also attached.

I would be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annexes to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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Annex

Letter dated 20 March 2013 from the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to bring to your attention the outcome of the Ministerial meeting on enhancing security cooperation and operationalizing the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region, held in Nouakchott, Islamic Republic of Mauritania, on 17 March 2013. The meeting was convened as a follow-up to the communiqué of the Peace and Security Council of 25 January 2013 and the conclusions of the meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on Mali, held in Brussels on 5 February 2013. It brought together Ministers and other representatives of Mali and its neighbouring countries and others from the region, as well as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, existing regional security arrangements, such as the Joint Operational Command (CEMOC), the Fusion and Liaison Unit based in Algiers, and the Secretariat as well as representatives of the five permanent members of the Security Council as observers.

The meeting agreed on measures to enhance security cooperation among the countries of the region and to facilitate the implementation of the mandate of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). These pertain to the strengthening of border security, intelligence-sharing and national capacity-building, as well as to the intensification of defence and security sector reform in Mali. The meeting also reached agreement on a process aimed at expediting the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region. Finally, the meeting agreed on a follow-up mechanism involving regular meetings at the technical and ministerial levels. I am attaching, herewith, the conclusions of the Nouakchott meeting (see enclosure).

Undoubtedly, enhanced regional cooperation in the area of security will contribute to the successful implementation of the mandate of AFISMA, particularly with respect to the fight against terrorist and criminal networks active in northern Mali, as well as to overall regional security and stability.

As consultations proceed on the transformation of AFISMA into a United Nations operation, the participants were of the view that any future United Nations operation in Mali should be mandated to extend support to, and coordinate with, the security cooperation initiatives in the region. This same concern was emphasized in the communiqué of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union of 7 March 2013, which was formally transmitted to the United Nations (S/2013/163).

It would be highly appreciated if you could circulate the present letter and the attached Nouakchott conclusions to the members of the Security Council for their information and action as appropriate.

(*Signed*) Ramtane **Lamamra**
Commissioner for Peace and Security

Enclosure

Ministerial meeting on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region

Nouakchott, Islamic Republic of Mauritania, 17 March 2013

Nouakchott conclusions

I. Introduction

1. As part of the follow-up to the communiqué of the meeting of the Peace and Security Council, held on 25 January 2013, at the level of Heads of State and Government, and the conclusions of the meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group, held in Brussels, on 5 February 2013, a consultative meeting on security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region was held in Nouakchott, Islamic Republic of Mauritania, on 17 March 2013.

2. Ministers and other representatives of the following countries of the region participated in the meeting: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. The following organizations and structures also took part in the meeting: the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, the Joint Operational Command (CEMOC), the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union, the Fusion and Liaison Unit and the United Nations. In addition, China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America attended the meeting as observers, in their capacity as permanent members of the Security Council.

II. Objectives

3. The objectives of the meeting were to:

(a) Facilitate the deepening of security cooperation between the countries concerned, through the coordination and strengthening of border control measures, as well as through intelligence-sharing. In so doing, the objective is to combat more effectively the criminal and terrorist networks operating in northern Mali and to help the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) to better fulfil its mandate;

(b) Initiate a process of consultations on the modalities for the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region, particularly considering the fact that the geographic coverage of the existing structures of the African Peace and Security Architecture does not exactly correspond to the configuration of the region.

III. Outcome

4. The meeting reached the following conclusions on the overall situation in Mali and on some specific aspects:

On the overall situation in Mali

5. The participants welcomed the positive developments in the situation in Mali, notably the liberation of the main towns in northern Mali following the launch, on 11 January 2013, of the joint Franco-Malian operation, with the support of ECOWAS and Chadian forces. They also welcomed the significant progress made in the deployment of AFISMA, and called on those countries that have made troop pledges to fulfil them. They further expressed satisfaction at the ongoing operations to secure and stabilize northern Mali and the contribution of the neighbouring countries, particularly through enhanced border control measures. The participants further noted with satisfaction the adoption of the road map for the transition, whose implementation would culminate in the holding of presidential and legislative elections in July 2013. The participants also took note of the establishment by the Government of Mali of the Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation. The participants called on the Malian transitional authorities to expeditiously implement the road map. They also drew attention to the proliferation of militias in some parts of Mali.

6. The participants acknowledged that the Sahelo-Saharan region continues to face serious security challenges, linked especially to terrorism, transnational crime and the proliferation of weapons. They affirmed their determination to make renewed efforts to address these challenges.

Specific aspects

Enhancement of security cooperation

7. The participants agreed on the need to spare no effort to consolidate the progress made in terms of security, facilitate the implementation of the AFISMA mandate and strengthen regional security and stability. In this regard, they stressed the need to enhance cooperation among the neighbouring countries of Mali, and pledged to take all necessary measures for this purpose.

8. The participants agreed, in particular, on the following measures to be implemented in the short, medium and long terms:

(a) The strengthening of border security through appropriate specific measures to prevent movements of terrorist and criminal groups. The countries concerned shall notify the Commission of the African Union (AU), within two weeks from the date of this meeting, of the measures taken by them and their implementation modalities;

(b) The enhancement of intelligence-sharing, through the Fusion and Liaison Unit and other structures. In this regard, the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism will convene regular meetings of its focal points within the countries and organizations concerned. The first such meeting will be held in Bamako within one month of the date of this meeting;

(c) The establishment by the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism of an adequate communication infrastructure to facilitate secure intelligence-sharing among all stakeholders;

(d) The strengthening of national capacities, including through exchange of experiences, training and equipment, based on the capacity-building initiatives currently undertaken by United Nations agencies, bilateral partners and the measures agreed to at the regional ministerial conference on border security held in Tripoli, as well as the framework provided by the African Union Border Programme and other related initiatives. In this regard, the Commission of AU will prepare, in consultation with the relevant partners, a programme of activities to be implemented during the year 2013, based on an as accurate as possible identification of the needs;

(e) The launching by the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism of assessment missions in the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan space to evaluate their capacity to fight against terrorism and to identify areas in which assistance would be needed, and the effective follow-up of the recommendations made by the missions already undertaken in the countries of the region;

(f) The intensification by Mali of its efforts towards the reform of its security and defence sector, to enable it to fully assume its responsibilities in the promotion of regional security and stability.

Transformation of AFISMA into a United Nations operation

9. The participants took note of the ongoing efforts to transform AFISMA into a United Nations operation. In this regard, they stressed the relevance of the observations made by the Peace and Security Council at its meeting held on 7 March 2013. In particular, they underscored the imperative need for the proposed United Nations operation to be provided with a robust mandate, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, to support the Malian Government in preserving the country's unity and in strengthening its authority over its entire territory, including the fight against the terrorist and criminal networks, and the protection of civilians, as well as to contribute to the enhancement of regional cooperation in the area of security and to support the initiatives of the countries of the region. They requested the Commission to closely follow the process and to ensure that the concerns expressed by the Peace and Security Council are properly taken into account.

Operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region

10. The participants also discussed the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region. The operationalization process should take into account the inappropriateness of the geographical coverage of the different existing structures.

11. The participants stressed the need for greater synergy among the different components of the African Standby Force covering the region (North, West and Central) and which have reached their operational capacity, to address the security challenges faced by the Sahelo-Saharan region. The steps to be taken should aim at ensuring closer cooperation in the field of intelligence-sharing, training and equipment, as well as at building the required operational capability to address the challenges faced on the ground.

12. Within this framework, the participants agreed to the following:

(a) The transmission by the countries and organizations concerned of their views and proposals on the modalities for operationalizing and strengthening the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region, on the basis of a questionnaire prepared by the Commission of AU;

(b) The preparation by the Commission, based on the responses to the questionnaire and its own assessment of the situation, of a report on the modalities for the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the region, taking into account ongoing efforts, results achieved and challenges faced;

(c) The convening by the Commission of a meeting of the countries concerned to consider the above-mentioned report and agree on the best way forward.

13. The participants expressed concern at the humanitarian situation in the region, exacerbated by the Malian crisis, and encouraged the countries concerned to take the necessary steps to ensure compliance with the norms governing the establishment of camps for refugees and internally displaced persons, and to ensure the security of those areas, in coordination with humanitarian agencies.

IV. Follow-up

14. The participants agreed to meet regularly, at different levels, to deepen their cooperation. As stated above, the focal points of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism and other designated representatives will meet at least once every two months to exchange on the evolution of the security situation in the Sahelo-Saharan region and to ensure the necessary follow-up. The relevant Ministers will meet at least once every six months.

V. Thanks

15. The participants thanked the Government of Mauritania for all the arrangements made for the smooth holding of the meeting. In particular, they expressed their deep gratitude to President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz, for his personal commitment and support for this initiative.